

Agenda Gap Community Report

Indigenous Perspectives Society 2024



Report prepared April 2025



Wellstream



INDIGENOUS
PERSPECTIVES
SOCIETY



agenda
gap



Introduction: IPS 2024 Agenda Gap

In partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association (BC Division) and the Indigenous Perspectives Society (IPS), eight youth were recruited and interviewed from Victoria, British Columbia between August and September 2023. Six youth participated in the weekly online Agenda Gap workshops from Oct 2023 until program conclusion in June 2024.

Background: About Agenda Gap

Agenda Gap is a facilitated relationship and capacity-building program that centres the expertise of youth in identifying what fosters mental health in their communities. It is action-oriented and supports youth and their adult allies in engaging to influence **policy**. This process promotes their own mental health while also improving conditions that influence mental health among their peers, families, communities, and society as a whole.

What the IPS Agenda Gap Youth Accomplished:

Agenda Gap Victoria youth attended a total of 48 hours of programming (with an average of 35.25 hours per youth), time which they spent time which they spent collaborating on various group activities, investigating issues of (in)equity, engaging in rich discussion (particularly in independent breakout rooms), and co-learning with facilitators from Wellstream and the Indigenous Perspectives Society. Agenda Gap Victoria youth accomplished several milestones, including crafting a community agreement, mission statement, and calls to action related to their priority challenge.

Mission Statement:

"As a group of eager, thoughtful youth, our mission is to inspire our peers to feel safe to use their voices to create openness and meaningful policy change related to youth substance use. We are focusing on increasing trauma informed supports and minimizing harms for all youth."

Agenda Gap Victoria participants identified the lack of substance-use and harm reduction education available to youth as their priority challenge. They felt this educational gap was causing youth to make poorly informed decisions about how they engage with substance use and was directly contributing to Canada's overdose crisis.

To learn more about this topic, participants interviewed two staff members from the health authority Healthy Schools team. Participants also interviewed a staff member from Indigenous Perspectives Society, who brought expertise on decolonizing harm reduction, along with other areas of knowledge.

Following their engagement with these adult allies, participants chose to focus their advocacy efforts on their school district's substance use policies. Participants developed and delivered a powerful presentation at an school district committee meeting, calling on them to adopt a non-punitive response framework and to integrate harm reduction principles more comprehensively into the educational curricula.

The presentation was well-received by school district staff who followed up on the youths' calls-to-action by engaging directly with the health authority team for more information to inform their policy review.



Slide from participants' SD61 presentation.

Evaluation Framework

To inform continuous program improvement and better understand its impacts, all participants are invited to take part in Agenda Gap evaluation activities. This includes individual interviews, pre- and post-program surveys, workshop evaluations, and Ripple Effects Mapping sessions. ***This report summarizes key findings from the pre- and post- program surveys and workshop evaluations.*** For more information about each of these evaluation tools and their objectives, please see below:

Pre- & Post - Surveys

The pre-survey, completed by participants at the beginning of the program, and the post-survey, taken by participants upon conclusion of the program, measure the following:

- Knowledge gains
- Policy-related achievements
- Personal impacts
- Positive relationships
- Changes to mental health
- Program reflections

See Appendix A for overview of survey measures.

Workshop Evaluations

Youth participants are invited to complete an anonymous workshop evaluation at the close of each session. They have the opportunity to rate their workshop experience, including what went well, offer compliments to other participants, and provide suggestions to improve future offerings.

The results are shared with the youth during subsequent workshops and are used by the facilitation team to inform program refinement.

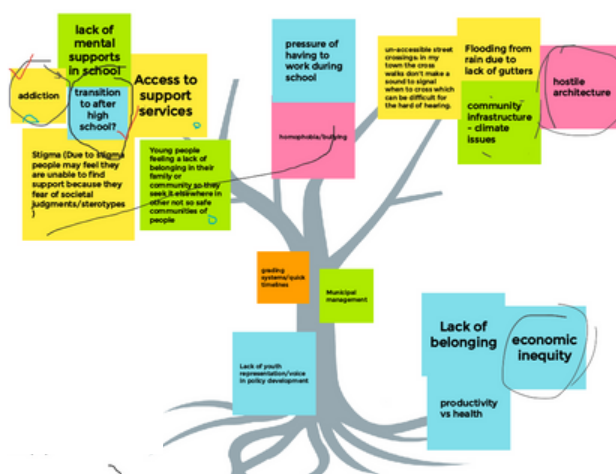
Pre- & Post- Survey Findings

Who participated?

Of the 6 youth participants, 4 completed both the pre- and post-surveys. Youth completing both surveys ranged in age from 16 to 22 years. The majority of participants identified as gender diverse (75%) with the remaining participant identifying as a girl/woman (25%).

Reported Policy-Related Impacts

All participants agreed that they found Agenda Gap workshops useful and that they plan to keep working with others to contribute to policy change. All participants also agreed that their involvement in Agenda Gap had increased their knowledge of mental health promotion, understanding of the social determinants of mental health, and awareness of how policy can be used as a tool for promoting mental health.



'Challenge Tree' Developed by Agenda Gap IPS Participants

Personal Impacts

Participants reported several positive personal impacts following their involvement in Agenda Gap. All participants agreed that because of Agenda Gap, they had gained relationships that support their wellbeing. All participants also agreed that they had gained skills to work effectively in group settings where people have different perspectives, and to identify and take action on changes needed in their community.

Youth-Facilitator Relationship

Participants endorsed positive youth-facilitator relationships, which included a sense of mutual respect, trust, co-learning, and sense of shared power (Figure 1). All participants strongly agreed that it was clear that youth and staff respected each other and that there was a good balance of power between youth and staff in this program. All participants agreed that they had learned a lot from staff in this program, that youth and staff learned a lot from working together, and that youth and staff trusted each other.



Measures of Mental Health and Well-Being

A number of established scales were used to measure the indicators of mental health among youth participants, including self-efficacy, well-being, motivation, peer and adult support, among other. For a list of these scales please see Appendix A. Scores improved across nearly all scales. (Figure 1).

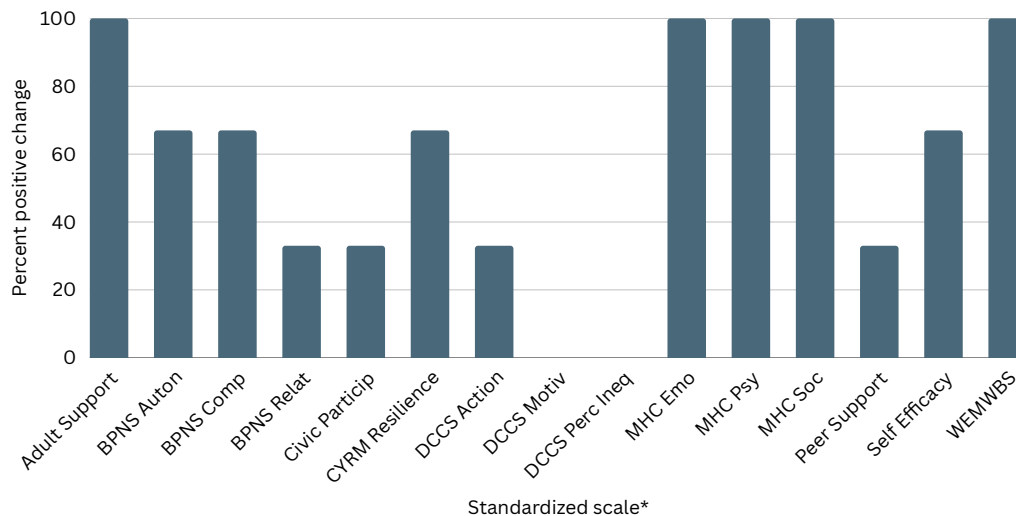


Figure 1. IPS Agenda Gap percent positive change pre- vs. post- intervention on mental health and wellbeing scales.

*See Appendix A for a description of the measures used

Workshop Evaluations

Over the course of 26 workshops, a total of 35 survey responses were collected. Of the participants who rated the meetings, overall 91% found the meetings to be good/excellent, 80% feel the meetings were productive, and 71% agree they learned something.

Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended responses collected in the workshop evaluations and post-survey allowed youth to elaborate on aspects of their Agenda Gap experience that were particularly impactful. Participants shared a variety of insights, including how they enjoyed connecting and

"learning from other people's lived experiences, thoughts and ideas".

Participants also described other benefits of the program:

"I noticed that I am more likely to suggest action as a solution, rather than ignoring the problem"

"It was really educational and fun! I learned a lot about narrative and directing your information and hook on your audience."

Finally, participants provided some feedback to strengthen the program, including that they would've preferred an in-person modality:

"I think in-person would've been more fun"

WORKSHOP EVALUATION RESULTS

VICTORIA, B.C.

PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS WHO RATE THE SESSION AS:



91%
excellent/good



34%
Agree they contributed a lot/a satisfying amount



80%
Agree the meetings were productive



71%
Agree they learned something new

LIKES

- Land acknowledgement before sessions.
- Thoughtful discussions in breakout rooms.
- Working together on group activities.
- Developing the mission statement.
- Information about harm reduction and health promotion.
- Connect & close activities.

CHALLENGES

- Finding the confidence to share during whole-group discussions.
- Difficulty focusing on Zoom and over 2 hour periods.
- Wanting to meet in-person.

Based on 35 responses from October 2023 - March 2024.

This report presents highlights from survey data collected as part of an evaluation of the Agenda Gap program delivered to youth in the Victoria area. Overall, the program was well-received and had a meaningful impact. All participants found Agenda Gap valuable, indicated they would contribute to policy change in the future, and shared personal gains they experienced through their involvement.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the youth, staff at Indigenous Perspectives Society, as well as the broader community that made this work possible!



Appendix A

Overview of Survey Measures

1. Basic Psychology Need Satisfaction Scale (BPNS): A scale that helps us understand whether people feel their core emotional and psychological needs are being met. It looks at three key areas: feeling in control of your own choices (autonomy), feeling capable and effective in what you do (competence), and feeling connected to others (relatedness). The scale explores both the positive experiences of having these needs fulfilled and the challenges people face when these needs aren't being met.

2. Child & Youth Resiliency Measure (CYRM): A questionnaire that helps us understand what supports young people's ability to bounce back from challenges. Aimed at youth ages 12 to 23, it looks at the strengths and resources they have—not just within themselves, but also in their relationships, communities, and cultures. Whether it's family support, a sense of belonging, or cultural identity, the CYRM helps identify what's helping youth stay strong and thrive, even in tough situations.

3. Diemer Critical Consciousness Scale (DCCS): Helps us understand how aware people are of the social and political issues around them—and how motivated they are to take action. It looks at two main things: how people think about fairness and inequality in society, and whether they get involved in efforts to make things more equal. This includes speaking up, getting involved in the community, and working toward positive change.

4. Mental Health Continuum (MHC) – Short Form: A short survey that helps assess overall mental well-being. It looks at how we're doing emotionally, how we feel about ourselves and our lives, and how connected we are to others. This tool helps identify whether someone is flourishing (feeling great and doing well), languishing (feeling low or stuck), or somewhere in between. It's a helpful way to check in on mental health—not just by looking for problems, but by recognizing and building on the positives too.

5. Mental Health Promoting Knowledge: This measure explores understandings about the key factors that support positive mental health. It focuses on mental health literacy from a strengths-based perspective, highlighting knowledge that promotes well-being rather than just identifying illness.

6. General Self-Efficacy Scale: Measures how confident people feel in their ability to handle life's challenges and reach their goals. It focuses on how much someone believes in themselves when facing tough situations, and whether they feel capable of making things work. In short, it looks at how strong someone's belief is that they can overcome obstacles and succeed through their own efforts.

7. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) – Short Form : Assesses overall mental well-being. It looks at how we feel day-to-day—like our happiness, life satisfaction, and how well we're coping with stress. It also considers how we function emotionally and socially, including things like staying positive, having good relationships, and feeling able to handle life's ups and downs.

8. Youth & Community Survey: This measure gathers information about youth's experiences and perceptions about **adult support**, **civic participation** within their communities, and **peer support** to assess impact on youth development and well-being.



Wellstream

The Canadian Centre for Innovation in Child & Youth
Mental Health & Substance Use

Agenda Gap

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